

VZCZCXYZ0000
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHIL #0637/01 0841153
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 251153Z MAR 09
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2017
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 9149
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO IMMEDIATE 5014
RUEHAAA/THE WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL//CCPA// IMMEDIATE
RHMFIUU/HQ PACAF HICKAM AFB HI//CCPA// IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 9945
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 7100
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 1083
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI

UNCLAS ISLAMABAD 000637

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [OIIP](#) [OPRC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PK](#)
SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: March 25, 2009

Summary: Remarks by the newly reinstated Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhary pledging to "cleanse judiciary of corruption" dominated headlines in all newspapers on Wednesday. All newspapers front-paged reports that the TNSM (Tehrik Nifaz Shariat Mohammadi) chief, Sufi Mohammad, "threatened" to wind up his peace camp (in Swat) if the government failed to enforce the 'Nizam-e-Adl' laws. In an exclusive story, the English daily, "Dawn" reported that "hectic consultations" began between Washington and Islamabad to "ensure that there are no surprises for Pakistan" in the new U.S. strategy for Pakistan and Afghanistan. Reports of a bomb blast in Quetta that injured at least four persons received prominent display.

Most major dailies ran editorials on the U.S. "exit strategy" on Afghanistan as hinted by President Obama during a recent interview. The prestigious English daily, "Dawn," observed that "Mr. Obama's reference to an exit strategy may have been meant to pacify his domestic audience and the U.S. international allies, all of whom worried about losing endless blood and treasure in a faraway place." The second largest Urdu daily, "Nawa-i-Waqt," opined that "President Barack Obama talks of troop withdrawal strategy for Afghanistan, and on the other his representatives like Holbrooke are describing Pakistan as the root of all the problems." The liberal English language daily, "Daily Times," advised the Pakistani politicians to "make up their mind whether they want to fight Al-Qaeda or not, and if not, what strategy they plan to pursue." End Summary.

News Stories

"Iftikhar Seeks To Cleanse Judiciary Of Corruption" "Dawn" (03/25)

"Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry, who marched triumphantly into his office on Tuesday after a break of 16 months, appealed to lawyers to help him rid the judiciary of corruption."

"Sufi Threatens To Close 'Peace Camp'" "Dawn" (03/25)

"TNSM chief Maulana Sufi Mohammad threatened on Tuesday to wind up his peace camp if the government failed to immediately enforce the Nizam-i-Adl Regulation."

"President Yet To Sign Nizam-e-Adl Draft" "Daily Times" (03/25)

"President Asif Ali Zardari has not signed the proposed Nizam-e-Adl (Sharia) Regulation 2009 for Malakand division, although the document was sent to him 11 days ago by the NWFP government. The NWFP sent the proposed regulation to the president after NWFP

Governor Owais Ghani approved it on March 13."

"NWFP Resolves To Implement Nizam-e-Adl" "The News" (03/25)

"The provincial policy committee on Tuesday reviewed the situation in different parts of the province and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata) and expressed the resolve to implement the Nizam-e-Adl in the troubled Malakand division."

"Hectic Consultations Precede Unveiling Of US Strategy" "Dawn" (03/25)

"Sending American troops into Pakistan is a "red line" that cannot be crossed, says US special envoy Richard Holbrooke, but he refuses to confirm or deny media reports that Washington may expand drone attacks to Balochistan. As the United States prepares to unveil the new strategy later this week, hectic consultations have begun between Washington and Islamabad to ensure that "there are no surprises for Pakistan in the new policy"

"Four Hurt In Quetta Blast" "The News" (03/25)

"Four persons were injured when a powerful bomb exploded near a cold drink outlet at the Liaquat Bazaar here on Tuesday afternoon. Police said the explosive device went off around 1:52 pm when the people were busy in shopping."

"BRA Women Claim Carrying Out Bomb Attack" "Dawn" (03/25)

"Four people were injured when a bomb exploded in a cafe in the busy Liaquat bazaar here on Tuesday, and the women's wing of the Baloch Republican Army claimed responsibility for the attack."

"20 Extremists Back In UK After Training" "Daily Times" (03/25)

"Pakistan has tipped off British government about more than 20 Britons believed to have spent time with radical militant groups and then returned to the UK. A Sky TV report said the tracked men may have trained with extremist outfits."

"Naek Speaks Of 'Befitting Response' To Drone Attacks" "Dawn" (03/25)

"Acting President Farooq H. Naek said on Tuesday that the United States had been told to stop drone attacks. He said that if they continued misadventure, the matter would be taken up in parliament and the world would see a befitting national response."

"Gilani Pays First Visit To Kahuta Laboratories" "Dawn" (03/25)

"Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani said on Tuesday that the government was fully aware of the country's defense needs and was pursuing a policy of maintaining credible minimum deterrence for the sake of peace and stability in the region. The prime minister was addressing a gathering of nuclear scientists during his first visit to the Kahuta Research Laboratories on the outskirts of the capital."

"Taliban Warn Against Cellular Service In Waziristan" "Daily Times" (03/25)

"The Taliban on Tuesday warned the government to stop expanding its mobile telephone network in Waziristan, claiming it would be used to spy on them."

"UN Team For Benazir Probe Due Next Month" "Dawn" (03/25)

"A United Nations technical team is expected to reach Pakistan in the third week of April to establish infrastructure in the country for the fact-finding mission to begin its investigation into the assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto."

"UNHCR Appeals For Solecki's Release" "Daily Times" (03/25)

"The UN refugee agency on Tuesday appealed for the release of John Solecki, an official who was kidnapped 50 days ago by Baloch insurgents."

"Obama Seeks Swift G20 Action" "Dawn" (03/25)

"US President Barack Obama sought swift action from G20 leaders on stimulating the economy abroad and new powers to wind down failing financial firms at home on Tuesday, a day after markets cheered his plan to soak up toxic assets weighing down the banks."

Editorials/Op-eds

"Exit America," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (03/25)

"Mr. Obama's reference to an exit strategy may have been meant to pacify his domestic audience and the US's international partners with a troop presence in Afghanistan, all of whom are worried about losing endless blood and treasure in a faraway place. Here in Pakistan it is important to properly understand the thrust of what the U.S. is attempting to do in Afghanistan in the years ahead. The simplistic, and dangerous, conclusion would be that the western world is preparing to turn tail and therefore our security establishment's policy of hedging its bets and keeping its links to militant's alive stands vindicated."

"Rogue State Within A Rogue State: American Analysis Or Plan? Cause Of Concern," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 125,000) (03/25)

"On the one hand President Barack Obama talks of troop withdrawal strategy for Afghanistan and on the other his representatives like Holbrooke are describing Pakistan as the root of all the problems.... The only strategy to face Taliban is that their status is recognized.... David Kilcullen's analysis is food for thought for the entire nation, its rulers and decision makers. This could be a conspiracy to get a hold of Pakistan's nuclear weapons...." "Obama And 'Exit Strategy' For Afghanistan," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (03/25)

"As Pakistan declares it wants NATO to leave Afghanistan, it has no post-withdrawal strategy of survival. It assumes that somehow, after withdrawal, America will continue with the same policy of "only carrots" towards Islamabad. In particular, Pakistan has no strategy about "filling the vacuum" in Afghanistan after the American exit, unless it wants the Taliban and Al Qaeda to oblige Pakistan while altruistically leaving Pakistan to be ruled as it is being ruled now. The plan to boost aid to Pakistan is still a part of a "realistic" policy of engagement in Afghanistan."

"No Easy Exit," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (03/25)

"With Pakistan and Afghanistan now joined at the hip in terms of American strategic thinking in the region and a planned U.S. 'surge' of 17,000 troops in Afghanistan in the near future; the need for an exit strategy is ever more urgent as 'drift' is nowhere on the Obama agenda. But surges and diplomatic engagement in Kabul and Islamabad are unlikely to produce the same results as in Iraq - where after seven years a semblance of stability is returning and honourable exit a real possibility. The two countries are like chalk and cheese, and what 'fixes' one may not 'fix' the other."

"Possibility Of U.S. Troop Withdrawal [From Afghanistan]," an editorial in the center-right Urdu daily "Pakistan" (cir. 10,000) (03/25)

"We want to applaud Obama that he did not make the troops withdrawal an issue of his ego.... Pakistan administration, religious scholars and intellectuals should start thinking about the problems that will emerge with the withdrawal of the U.S. troops from Afghanistan."

"U.S. Announcement Of Strategy Of Withdrawal From Afghanistan," an editorial note in the Karachi-based, pro Taliban Jihadi Urdu daily "Islam" (cir. 15,000) (03/25)

"At last the U.S. has felt the need of a 'safe exit' from Afghanistan, and President Obama, in an interview, has said that as additional troops are being stationed in Afghanistan, there should be a policy of safe exit from Afghanistan too.... U.S. must understand that peace in Afghanistan is subject to pulling out of

foreign troops from the war-torn country. Moreover, the declining American economy also requires that instead of squandering dollars on the barren mountains and inhospitable land of Afghanistan, the U.S. administration must take care of the thousands of Americans who stand jobless owing to the global economic meltdown."

"Afghan Imbroglia," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (03/25)

"The U.S. knows very well that the principal threat to Pakistan's security and viability comes from what it calls the jihadist forces, which are the creation of its own masterstroke, dating back to the days of Afghan resistance to the Soviet forces... Now, it points a finger at Pakistan as being the most dangerous point from which could emanate threat to U.S. and Western interests... Mr Obama's exit strategy should give serious thought to the *raison d'être* of these ugly ground realities and take pains to deal with the root causes of terrorism."

"Fresh Nonsense Of A Senior U.S. Advisor," an editorial note in the popular rightist Urdu-language daily "Ausaf" (cir. 10,000) (03/25)

"A senior adviser to the U.S. CENTCOM has warned that the Pakistan state could collapse within six months, if immediate steps aren't taken to remedy the situation... These remarks are baseless and a pack of lies and the Jewish lobby is behind this story. And perhaps they are perturbed over the growing awareness of the Pakistani nation, and the independence of judiciary in the country. The aim of this report is nothing but to generate a hype of Al-Qaeda, to persuade the U.S. administration that if it doesn't launch military operation inside Pakistan, the Al-Qaeda and Taliban will take over the country within six months."

"U.S. Offer For Kashmir Solution," an editorial in the Lahore-based populist center-right Urdu daily "Khabrain" (cir. 50,000) (03/25)
"According to a newspaper report, America has assured Pakistan of renewed efforts to resolve the Kashmir issue with the condition that Pakistan and Iran first play a role in bringing about [U.S] reconciliation with the Taliban. Any such effort from the U.S. should be welcomed. However, America has always abandoned us after achieving its objectives. If the U.S. plays a concrete role in helping resolve the Kashmir issue, it would go a long way in improving U.S. image at the public level. If that happens, Pakistan would have no objection to fostering a Taliban-U.S. reconciliation."

"Pakistan's Major Threat: U.S. Ignorance," an op-ed by Shireen M Mazari in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (03/25)

". . . Certainly nothing has impacted the Pakistani populace against the U.S. as the drone attacks have, and U.S. ignorance about the functioning of our society has made them continue with this negative policy. . . Perhaps the absurdity of the U.S. ignorance is reflected most clearly now in the statements coming from Obama's Special Envoy for this region, Richard Holbrooke. He showed it after his visit to Pakistan when he talked about people not being able to walk their dogs in Peshawar. More recently he declared, with his usual arrogance, that the 9/11 terrorists, the killers of Ms Bhutto, the Mumbai attackers and the perpetrators of the attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team were all one and the same lot."

"War On Terror And U.S. Expectations," an editorial in the Lahore-based independent Urdu daily "Din" (circ. 5000) (03/25)
"In an interview with a British television President Zardari has said that we have not received a single dollar yet, and that Britain and the U.S. should help us or we will not be able to fight the war on terror.... Despite spending billions of dollars and an untold amount of weaponry, the U.S. President admits even today that terrorist havens continue to exist in Afghanistan and that Al Qaeda could still attack U.S. and allied interests. In this scenario, without giving the present [Pakistani] government a single dollar, how does the U.S. expect Pakistan to continue the war on terror according to its expectations, for the protection of U.S. interests."

"Those Elements Who Challenge Pakistan's National Security Must Be Responded Befittingly," an editorial in the leading mass circulation centrist Urdu daily "Jang" (cir. 300,000) (03/25)

"The government must put in plain words why the U.S. officials are now declaring Quetta as a 'safe haven' for Mullah Omar and Usama Bin Laden? Have they any concrete evidences for such serious allegations? Haven't they planned to hit Balochistan with drone missiles in the garb of this preposterous stance? This U.S. stance clearly shows that following FATA, their next target is Balochistan.

The remarks of the U.S. military adviser to General Petraeus, and Ambassador Holbrooke are a matter of serious concern for the whole Pakistani nation."

"Mumbai Attacks: Indian Ratification Of Pakistani Stance," an editorial in the liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 100,000) (03/25)

"Indian Home Minister P. Chidambaram has said that there is no clear evidence of Pakistani state involvement in the Mumbai attacks although the attacks have links to the Pakistani soil. This Indian ratification of Pakistan's stand is a proof that terrorists are non-state actors and pose as much threat to India as they do to Pakistan. Hence, instead of strengthening the terrorists and weakening Pakistan, India should support Pakistan in its efforts to counter terrorists."

"Umeed-e-Sehar (Hope of Light)," an Op-ed by Nasim Zehra in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (03/25)

". . . The Americans too appreciate Pakistan's current anti-status political developments. Hence, the Americans may have not been players but followers in the current phase. The flow of political events forced them to change their assessment on General Parvez Musharraf's viability as president and subsequently they changed their original position on supporting President Asif Zardari all the way. Instead, the British and the U.S. Secretary of States both called President Zardari to "encourage" him to take steps to prevent the impending March 16 confrontation. What we are experiencing in Pakistan is that the demands of a growing mass movement asking for rule of law, justice and good governance, the logical and effective response to the challenges Pakistan faces, our permanent Establishment's desire for internal stability and political cease-fire, the international demands made for internal political stability and good governance all seem to converge to force the hand of the state and politician in the right direction."

Patterson